

COMMISSION ON THE CITY PLAN
Tuesday, January 17, 2023 - 7:00 P.M
Hybrid Meeting
23 Union Street – Lower Level Conference Room - NORWICH, CT

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Frank Manfredi called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

ROLL CALL AND SEATING OF ALTERNATES:

Present: Chairman Frank Manfredi, Vice Chairman Les King, Michael Lahan (Zoom), Ella Myles (Zoom), and Kathy Warzecha.

Staff Present: City Planner Dan Daniska, Rich Shuck, ZEO was present to provide technical assistance with Zoom; Alba Blake was present to provide translation services.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 17, 2022

On a motion by Les King, seconded by Kathy Warzecha, the CCP tabled the minutes until the February 21, 2023 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

**CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING APPLICATION:
SP#22-04/CAM #22-02:**

23 Thermos Avenue. (Note Special Permit Number Correction) Request for a Special Permit for a proposed high rise multi-family development consisting of two (2) four story buildings with twenty six (26) units each including lower level parking garages, a community center with meeting rooms, pool and attached garages, and other site improvements including drainage, parking lots, sidewalks, landscaping and lighting. Application of CLA Engineers, Inc. Property of River Heights Development, Inc. Assessor's Map 125, Block 1, Lot 1. Zone MF/CAM Overlay. (Continued from 12/12/2022)

Dan Daniska stated that there were a number of things missing from the application packet that was submitted by the applicant for the December meeting. Mr. Daniska shared that all the requested documents have since been submitted.

Les King and Michael Lahan were not present at the December CCP Meeting/Public Hearing, as such, they recused themselves from acting on the application. Frank Manfredi, Kathy Warzecha, and Ella Myles will be acting on the matter for the CCP.

Michael Franklin, the president of River Heights Development, Inc. said they weren't prepared last time since they were not connected to the website and so they couldn't see the comments coming in. As a result, he gave a new presentation.

Riverview at River Heights:

Michael Franklin, owner/applicant provided an overview of the project: The submitted proposal consists of three buildings an amenity building, Building 1 and Building 2. The buildings are carved

into the hill and take advantage of stepping so the buildings will have great views of the river. They've designed a parking area that has elevator access to the buildings from underneath so that all units will be accessible. They plan to dedicate the proper number for handicap accessibility as far as accouterments, doorways etc. Michael then corrected documentation saying there are 52 units by explaining there are actually 51 residential units. They plan to work in two phases. Phase 1 is the amenity building and the first building. Phase 2 is building two. The stormwater infrastructure for the entire site will be constructed in phase 1. This will ensure that at the start of phase 2, it's going to catch the storm runoff from the construction going forth so that part of the site will already be in place. The amenity building is about 3,900 sq. ft. This building will have a gathering room, workout room, a rental office, and a boardroom. And there is a 5,600 sq. ft. deck area that will have a pool and a pergola area. Each building is 4 stories with parking underneath. There are 26 residential units in building 1, 12 two-bedroom units, 8 one bedroom units, and 6 one bedroom units with a home office, in consideration of the increase of people working from home. Building 2 will have 25 units, one less unit than building 1. That space is for storage and an office for the person managing the property.

History: A decade ago the site was designed as a 52 unit townhome community. The townhomes were too large and expensive to meet market needs. Construction stopped building in the area until there became a high demand for rentals. So they went from 2,000 sq. ft. two full car garage, and big storage to parking underneath, elevator access, apartments from 750-800 sq. ft. to 1,200 sq. ft. Michael worked with the River Heights Condominium Association for a year, because it was a part of the common elements. In order for us to complete their design and present it to the town, we needed to withdraw this land from the common element. It took about two years for them to redesign, work with Bob Kroll, and come up with an agreeable solution. Bob presented a letter which is in the record that is in favor of this permit.

Michael Franklin stated that they've been working with Norwich Public Utilities, Rob Harris, Devin Schleidt, and they are putting in state of the art systems for energy efficiency and lower energy costs. They have LED lighting, heat pump hot water heaters, hybrid systems, and the gas is the backup. They've increased the impervious services to be more eco-friendly by over 40%.

Architectural designs:

Michael Franklin presented a submitted drone photo of the area so commissioners can get a true sense of the entire site. Every unit will have a terrace but not every unit will get the water view. Town regulations say a high-rise can be up to 105 ft., buildings 1 and 2 are 55ft.

Section 7.7.6, is what they need the special permit for. Michael discussed and explained page 3 of the attached narrative that were reasons the permit should be approved.

Kermit Hua, a registered professional engineer for the state of CT, shared how the increased number units may affect traffic. The biggest issue would be with the Integrated Charter School when people from the units leave for work. Overall he believes in terms of traffic impact that it is not a major change from the previously approved application, and that the roadway has more than enough capacity to accommodate these limited number of increased trips. Commissioners then questioned how this would affect the school buses. Kermit Hua responded by stating that in his professional opinion, he did not anticipate any issues with traffic related to the project.

Dan Daniska and Richard Shuck discussed newly adopted State of Connecticut regulations

requiring electric vehicle charging stations shared that “as of the first of the year the state is requiring any large multi-family developments to provide infrastructure for vehicle charging stations. So City Staff will work with you through the post-process to make sure that is done in coordination with NPU”. Dan Daniska showed the exhibit list on the screen and asked that the Commission waive the reading, as he would submit it to the clerk for minutes preparation.

On a motion by Kathy Warzecha, seconded by Ella Myles, the reading of the exhibit list was waived.

Discussion ensued among the Commissioners regarding roadway improvements, traffic volumes, and sidewalk locations.

On a motion by Kathy Warzecha, seconded by Ella Myles, the public hearing ended.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to approve the application with modifications (Condition 1: that the bonds be posted in addition for erosion and sediment control but for the road work within the town right away. Condition 2: to add the sidewalk on the south side of Thermos Avenue to connect to the sidewalk that addresses the other thermos development. Condition 3: Address the vehicle charging station requirements. Condition 4: That Dan Daniska’s memo be addressed). Seconded by Ella Myles. The motion was carried and the special permit was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

PUBLIC HEARING AND POTENTIAL ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING APPLICATION:

SP#22-05: 495 East Main Street. Request for a Special Permit to Change from a Non-Conforming Restaurant Use to Another Non-Conforming Use for a Hookah Lounge. Application of Conrado Santaliz Semidey; Property of Conrado Santaliz Samidey; Assessor’s Map 103, Block 4, Lot 33. Zone MF & R-40/CAM Overlay

Alba Blake, City Staff from the Planning and Neighborhood Services Department, attended to translate as needed for The applicant, Conrado Santaliz Semidey.

On a motion from Les King, second by Ella Myles, the public hearing was opened.

Attorney Simones was present to help the applicant. He says the applicant owns 495, 499 and a piece behind it which could possibly be combined. Atty. Simones read over Dan's plan review memo, and his clients are looking for an architect to determine the viability of a hookah lounge. The proposal is that they would be allowed to open on Fridays and Saturday evenings for the possible hours of 10pm-4am. There are some things they have not yet submitted like the double insulation which will help quiet the building. They are looking to create a place people can go after the clubs/bars where they offer non-alcoholic drinks and hookah to smoke. Hookah is a special type of tobacco called Shiva not marijuana.

The neighbors have been notified about their project and the applicants have started basic restoration on the building. They hope to get suggestions and ideas to move forward. If he gets even a provisional special permit with conditions on it they can get started. Atty. Simones believes it would be less disruptive than a pizza place.

Commissioners were concerned about the hours of operation, and potential expansion of the

hours in the future. The applicant, Conrado Santaliz Semidey responded that it will only be a wind-down place for after the club. They also plan to have high security, a metal detector, two security guards and zero tolerance for weapons or violence. They hope to contact the police to pay for an officer to be there for the last two hours. If it does well he hopes to open other locations. Parking would be on the right side of the building to the paved area in the back. Patrons must be 21 or older to enter the business, currently you must be 21 or older to buy tobacco products.

The commission wants the applicant to merge the properties, they want a gate at the back of the parking lot and to move the dumpster. Kathy doesn't feel they met the Special Permit requirements at this time and asks that they table the application. The application should meet a 13 point criteria, and the applicants should explain how they meet the criteria/points.

The Commission received two public comments about this. Dan Daniska read them into the record. Joanne Philbrick sent an unfavorable email about the Hookah Lounge. They also received an email from the Norwich Police Chief about it. Groton has a Hookah Lounge and the Groton Town Police have had many negative experiences, including stabbings, shootings, large fights, disturbances and more. But unlike Groton Lounge, Conrado explained there would be no BYOB, not even in the parking lot.

Kathy Warzecha made a motion to table the application and continue it to the February 21st meeting, so Conrado can address the special excursion requirements. It was seconded by Michael Lahan, and unanimously approved.

COMMUNICATIONS: The Connecticut land use law for municipal land use agencies boards and commissions is coming up Saturday, March 11th 2023, at 9am-4:30pm. It's an online webinar through the CT bar association. If anyone on the commission wants to attend please contact Dan Daniska. All commissioners have to go through the training. Kathy requested that a calendar app that shows different formations through CLEAR be shared by email with all the commission members. She signed up for 3 of the classes, and stated that there are criteria they have to connect with to be sure we're getting trained in the right areas.

BOND REDUCTION/RELEASE REQUESTS: None.

POCD UPDATE: The planning department got a second data deck, and held second POCD meeting. The deadline is in August so they want to have a draft by the end of April. There will be vision, goal setting and objectives. They need a CCP Rep. for the COGs regional planning.

STAFF REPORT: None

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Michael Lahan, seconded by Les King, the CCP unanimously adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Ivery R. Stakley*